# As my kidults finally prepare to leave home, I consider the pros and cons

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**W**e have coexisted with our four adult children since they finished school or university and came back to live with us. I was beginning to think they would never move out. But now two are leaving: Jake has landed the job he wanted, and is moving into a flatshare with friends in a couple of months. Zac has returned to his second term at university and still has three years when he will be, mostly, living away from home.

Our house is on the market, and once someone buys it, our twins, Megan and Lily, will find a flatshare, and Ed and I will be well on our way to living the life of empty nesters. At last, we will have carpets without coffee stains, a full fridge, emptied bins, a tidy kitchen, uncluttered cupboards without [dozens of boxes of herbal tea falling on our heads](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/may/06/builders-peppermint-or-bags-of-sawdust-battle-commences-over-tea) when we open them, and – whisper it – peace and quiet.

But every night as I try to go to sleep, the words “be careful what you wish for” come to haunt me, as I worry about the massive upheaval of selling our home, the stress of moving, and the loss of our live-in children. I will miss them – even the stuff I moan about, the noise, chaos, arguments – I will miss it all. Well, maybe not the damaged furniture and the huge shopping bills. There will be some benefits to living without them.

However, the reasons behind their moving out are sound: they need to live independently to develop and grow as adults; and we can do without the financial burden of running a six-person household. Instead of feeling negative, I have realised that I need to celebrate our time together and focus on the many positive changes our kidults have brought into our lives since they boomeranged back home.

Because of them, Ed and I are now vegan. The kids have educated us about the disastrous impact the dairy and meat industries have on the environment and the truth behind factory farming. Once we knew the facts, we couldn’t return to our old diet. A plant-based diet means I have learned a different way of shopping for food and a new way of cooking; and as a result, Ed and I are not only happier, we are also slimmer and healthier. Having a son who is an environmental activist has taught me to question energy choices and to try to be a part of helping to bring positive environmental changes into our own household and the wider world.

My eclectic and stylish twin daughters have given me the knack of shopping in charity and vintage shops, so that I have acquired some amazing designer bargains and unique items. Being vegan, I no longer wear leather. And I have even been inspired to step away from wearing jeans and shades of black and grey to mixing colours and textures and shapes.

I now listen to music that I would otherwise never have heard of. Through Jake, I have discovered [the power and joy of 5Rhythms dance meditation](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jul/01/im-fooled-into-believing-im-a-twentysomething-like-my-kids), and the African dance classes that have brought fitness and dance expression back into my life. Surrounded by youth, I feel youthful and enthusiastic myself. Of course, I am not influenced by everything my children do – certain things haven’t rubbed off, such as multiple piercings and tattoos.

When the children do move out and we are settled in our smaller place, I know myself well enough to predict that I will want to acquire another rescue dog to add to the three we already have. I know that Ed knows it too and is frantically thinking ahead for a list of reasons to convince me why we shouldn’t. Five animals is enough, he will say. Think of the carpets, he will entreat. Consider the expense, he will add. But we are both used to living in a crowd. We are used to the extra love and sense of purpose that looking after creatures gives us; and even he might be tempted when he looks around our neat and tidy and nearly empty new house and wonders how we can get a little of the infuriating, ruinously expensive, but ultimately life-enhancing chaos that we are used to back into our lives.